

REFLECTIONS  
ON  
D U E L L I N G,  
AND ON  
THE MOST EFFECTUAL MEANS  
FOR  
PREVENTING IT.

---

*Quod genus hoc hominum? quæve hunc tam barbara morem  
Permittit patria?*

VIRG. ÆN. lib. i. v. 543.

---

---

EDINBURGH:  
PRINTED FOR W. CREECH,  
BY GRANT AND MOIR,  
FATERSON'S COURT.  
M,DCC,XC.

THE BRITISH MUSEUM

EDUCATION

STATIONER & PRINTER

PRINTING



PRINTED BY

PRINTED BY



# REFLECTIONS

ON THE

## PRACTICE OF DUELLING.

---

IT was with great pleasure, that, above a twelve-<sup>Introduction,</sup> month ago, I read a paragraph of a News-paper, in which it was said, that a respectable society at Norwich intended to exert itself against duelling. At that time, I began to turn my attention to that very important subject, with some design of committing my thoughts on it to writing, and of transmitting them to that society, if they should signify to the public, as it was hinted they would, that they were willing to receive pieces of this nature. But as, since then, I have been able to learn nothing further of their resolutions; and as I think it a pity, or even a fault, to defer any thing that could contribute ever so little to the extirpation of so shameful and pernicious a practice; I have come to a determination of publishing these reflections immediately; hoping they may be of some use in removing the prejudices which I attack, and in bringing men to think more reasonably on this head than at present they generally do.

A

I SHALL

**Definition of a  
Duel.**

I SHALL begin by giving as exact a definition, or description, of a duel, as I can ; because this will enable us to judge the more justly of it, and help to prevent our being deceived by a vague, vulgar expression, which is what often happens to superficial minds. What then is this affair, so frequently talked of, that we call a *Duel*? “ A duel, I think, is a combat between two persons, with danger of their lives, entered into without any public authority for it, in consequence of a challenge given by one of the parties, who imagines that he himself, or some person dear to him, has been affronted by the other, and intends by these means to wipe off the affront that is supposed to have been received.”

**First Objection  
to the Definition.**

To this definition two objections may be made. It may be said, in the first place, that the lives of the duellists are not always in danger, because sometimes these heroes make a secret previous agreement not to hurt one another ; and, at other times, the seconds, disapproving of the business, charge the pistols without ball.

**Answer.**

IN the first case, there is no duel, but an imposition on the world, which though I excuse in some degree, because this method is not sanguinary, unless, as has happened, one of the parties, breaking his promise, assassinates the other ; yet the gentlemen

men would be ashamed did their trick come to be known. Neither is it a duel in the other case, but only the representation of one; and if the antagonists are in earnest, and learn the friendly manœuvre of their attendants, they will not account it a real duel, but will insist on a more dangerous method.

It may, in the second place, be alleged, that a duel is not always fought to wipe off an affront, but sometimes out of revenge, or to gratify some other passion.

Second Objection to the Definition.

This may well be; but, on the least consideration, it will be acknowledged, that to seek to kill another through revenge, would be an endeavour to commit downright murder, in the strictest meaning of the word: and whatever other shameful motives may prompt foolish men to these unreasonable combats, it must, I think, be owned, that the only motive, that is wont to be avowed by the challenger, is, the reparation of his own honour, or of that of some person that is dear to him.

Answer.

HAVING thus settled what a duel is, let us now examine whether or not this practice is proper for attaining the end proposed by it; for if we find that it is not at all calculated for the pretended purpose, it must be declared to be absurd by every reasonable person. The end which the challenger proposes, to

Duels absurd,

On the part of the challenger;



himself in giving the challenge is, as we have seen, to wipe off an affront. Is then the challenge, and the duel in consequence of it, the proper means for producing this intended effect? He has been called a scoundrel or a liar, for example: Does his going out to shoot at the person who called him so, and to be shot at by him, prove that he is not a scoundrel, that he is not a liar? Surely it does not; unless it can be shown, that a scoundrel or a liar cannot have boldness or madness enough to go out and expose his life in that manner. But we have good reason to believe, that very great villains often take such rash steps. Nay, if we consider this matter coolly, we will see clearly, that it is generally more probable, that he who gives a challenge is worthless, than that he is irreproachable. The person, who is conscious of his own real worth, is superior to calumny, despises the calumniator; and, if chastisement be requisite, he disdains to be the executioner: nor is he so imprudent as to put his own injured innocence on a level with the other's guilt. He considers the consequences, as a wise man should do: and, whatever the prejudiced world may say, he attends to what his friends, his country, his God requires of him, and does not choose wantonly to expose himself to murder, or to be murdered. But the villain who cannot conceal his worthlessness from himself, nor perhaps from others, is apt to go on desperately; and, not having any rational way to defend himself from de-

served

served reproach, has recourse to the irrational one of a duel, which proves little more, to men of sense, than his folly, and gives grounds to suspect he is conscious, that he has little in himself solid or good, on which he can depend.

WE come now to take a short view of the person who receives the challenge. Does his accepting it prove to satisfaction, that what he advanced was really true? This, I think, would be a new mode of reasoning: "I have resolution enough, or what you please to call it, to stand up and put my own life, and that of another, in the greatest danger; therefore what I said against that same man's reputation was the truth." Does this consequence follow? I am persuaded most people will join with me in thinking, that the liar, the calumniator, will be fully as ready to go out to this foolish combat, as the person who has said what was true. This last, very wisely, does not think it at all incumbent on him to put his life in danger with one whom he knows to be unworthy of his regard; and he considers, that to fight a duel would be making a person of no worth his own equal; whilst he has other much more proper means to make good what he has affirmed. Whereas, on the other hand, the challenged calumniator, not being able to prove his calumnies, is not displeased with an appeal to pistols, where falsehood has an equal chance with truth; unless we expect miracles

On the part of  
the acceptor of  
the challenge.

racles in favour of the truth, or suppose that truth and justice on a man's side make him shoot the better. The more you consider, whether or not the standing in a field and shooting at another, and being shot at by him, be a proper means to discover the truth or falsehood of what one has said; the propriety or impropriety of what one has done, the less fit will you see that practice to be for that purpose. What we have said of fire-arms may be equally applied to swords, and every other weapon; because any superior dexterity in managing them has no connexion with what is true, just, or honourable. May we not, therefore, safely conclude, that duelling is absurd; because it is no proper means for the attaining of the end that is aimed at by it? You might as well blow on a gouty limb to cure it of that distemper, as fight a duel to wipe off an affront, or to prove, that, in any particular, you are in the right.

**Objection.**

BUT I am well aware, that against all this reasoning of mine a very formidable objection will be brought. It will be said, that the world, or at least the men of honour in it, are agreed on this point, that the fighting of a duel is the true test of honour, and atones for almost all offences in that line: And, say our gentlemen, as the world, on whose opinion our honour, our reputation, and interest depend, has come to this decision, we must necessarily act accordingly, and fight duels on many occasions. Will you  
do



do so, even in direct opposition to reason and common sense? If your men of honour, as you are pleased to call them, should think proper to tell you, that it would be very honourable for you to dance naked through the streets at mid-day, would you think yourselves obliged to give your assent to them? Surely not: And will you pay any regard to them, when they assure you, that two men, whose honour was doubtful before, become persons of undoubted honour, by merely firing pistols at one another, with an intention of taking away one another's life?—True honour consists in keeping one's word exactly, in being grateful to benefactors, courageous in unavoidable dangers, in being a kind husband, a dutiful son, a careful father, a faithful friend, an obliging neighbour, an affable companion, an useful citizen, a loyal subject: But how the shooting at another, and the being shot at by him, comes to have any necessary connexion with honour, is not so easily to be conceived. I have certainly seen persons, who had repeatedly fought duels, and yet had very little true honour.

I must indeed own, that the groundless prejudice in favour of duels in some parts of the world, is very common in these times; and I cannot help sympathising greatly with weak, young men, who have neither principles of duty sufficiently fixed in their minds, nor penetration enough to see all the malice  
of

of duelling, nor courage and resolution to resist a too-prevailing custom, or to bear the weight of obloquy, though undeserved, when their very superiors, many times, instead of opposing this shocking practice, which they are obliged to do, give no small encouragement to it by the manner in which they speak and act. I have often pitied such persons, reduced to the sad alternative of either being hooted at, and almost expelled from the company of their equals, or of committing the most horrid of crimes. It is with a view to relieve them, if possible, from this cruel necessity, that I write at present; and do, I think, clearly demonstrate, that, however general the approbation of duelling may be, this is a most false prejudice; like to that among the degenerate Romans, in consequence of which they made men mangle and kill one another before the eyes of their guests while at table, to entertain and honour them.—But, before we end, we shall return to this opinion in favour of duelling, as we are sensible that it is the greatest obstacle we have to surmount in our present undertaking.

Another Objection.

I HAVE also often heard it said, that at least the fighting of a duel proves that a man has courage—which is a valuable quality, very honourable in itself, and very useful to him who is possessed of it, and to his friends and country on many occasions.

THIS

THIS observation is specious, and is apt to deceive superficial minds, that take not pains to distinguish between appearances and realities. But let us examine it. The having fought a duel proves, no doubt, that a man has had intrepidity enough to put his own life, and that of one of his fellow-creatures, in imminent danger ; but this is really all that it proves. It does not shew, that this intrepidity did not proceed from revenge, infidelity, want of foresight, a fear of being despised, or some such foolish or vicious motive ; and if it did proceed from any one or more of them, as is always the case in duels, it does not by any means deserve the name of true courage. A truly courageous man, who is certainly very valuable to society, is ready to venture his life, and encounter the danger of death, when there is a sufficient reason for his doing so ;—when the defence of his king and country, the relieving of his neighbour from peril, or the discharge of any other important duty, demands it. But he, who can rashly expose his own life, and attack that of another, without a reasonable cause, is a dangerous creature, and scarcely deserves the name of a man ; nor should he be permitted to live among men, seeing his dispositions so much resemble those of a wild beast.

WHAT we have hitherto said on the absurdity of duelling, is almost all of it applicable to men considered without any regard to their political connections ;

Duelling contrary to the essential laws of society.



and an insult on  
Government.

tions : But, in fact, we do live in society, and are consequently under many obligations and restrictions, some of which render duelling very criminal. By the very nature of civil government, the judgment of crimes, and the punishment of criminals, is necessarily taken from the individuals injured, and is committed to judges and juries, and executioners, chosen for the purpose and authorised by the State. Now, what shall we say of the duellists, who, being parties, make themselves judges and executioners all at once—and that when life is in question? Can there be any more flagrant infraction of the laws of society? Is it not strange that any government is so weak, or so negligent, as to suffer such an usurpation of its powers?—Again, every subject essentially belongs to the State, in consequence of his having been educated in it, and protected by it : Hence our lives are not our own ; nor can we throw them away, nor attack those of others, by our own private authority, without being guilty of a much more heinous crime than that of theft or robbery, because life is incomparably more valuable than the greatest treasures ; nor, indeed, without being guilty of murder : For what is murder, but the willingly taking away the life of another without public authority? And is it not a kind of self-murder to expose one's own life to imminent danger, out of caprice, and for some petty quarrel, when the good of the State does not at all require it, but requires the contrary? True, indeed,

it

it is, that very often the State would not lose much, though both the duellists should fall at once, as sometimes it happens; nay, perhaps, it would be thus freed from nuisances: But for their being useless or hurtful members of society they are blameable; neither does their worthlessness dispense them from the laws, nor give them a permission to murder one another.

LET us now come to what must be particularly affecting to a well-formed, humane mind; and wonderful it must seem to every thinking person, that the following considerations do not occur to every duellist, who has the least pretence to honour or conscience, and make the murdering pistol fall from his justly-trembling hand. Is there, then, any one, who goes out to fight a duel, who has not father or mother, brother or sister, wife or children, or friend? And will not his antagonist have some persons in the like relations to him? Now, what greater injury can be done to these near connections, who surely should be dear to a man of honour, than to deprive them in so shocking a manner of those whom they so tenderly regard, and who are, perhaps, their principal or only human support? What will be the transports of grief that will seize your mother, your sisters, your wife, your innocent children, when your lifeless, bloody corpse will be brought to them from the place of the detestable conflict? And if it happen that you

Duelling inhuman.

be the survivor, and have been the barbarous instrument of such sorrow to the friends of another, what must not your self-condemnation be, if you are not an unfeeling monster? Never can any thing bring the murdered victim of his own madness and your's to your remembrance, but his widow and orphans, or his childless mother, rendered such by your guilty hand, must stare you in the face, and torture your troubled conscience.

Objection.

BUT it is courage to despise such considerations.

Answer.

No: To be regardless of such connections would be inexcusable in a Hottentot. Were we to lose our lives bravely in a just war, or in procuring any considerable good to our fellow-creatures, our friends would then have reasonable grounds of comfort: and the person who has deprived another of life in self-defence, or with some such truly just motive, though the reflection be still disagreeable, has nevertheless means of making himself pretty easy. But when the matter, that has brought on death and desolation, has been some trifling punctilio, some insignificant dispute, some drunken quarrel, as is commonly the case in duels, must not the sorrow of the friends of the deceased be almost inconsolable? Must not the remorse of the criminal survivor be bitter and lasting? If any person of sensibility and of moral principles, who has ever been engaged in  
a duel,



a duel, should happen to cast his eyes upon these lines, and if he did put an unhappy end to the life of his antagonist, will he not acknowledge that he sincerely regrets his having ever committed that unlucky action? Will he not own, that he wishes the day had never dawned on which their quarrel began—on which he had the misfortune to leave dead on the spot one of his fellow-creatures, who perhaps had formerly been his bosom friend? But if it fortunately happened that the consequences were not so fatal as they might well have been, and he did not shed the blood of his adversary, will he not be glad at having escaped the committing of murder, and shudder at the thoughts of having been so near the precipice; resolving to avoid such a danger for the time to come, and to shew, on all proper occasions, his disapprobation of what humanity so strongly forbids, and so severely condemns?

In the next place, let me ask of the duellists and their abettors, Whether they believe there is a God, to whom we are accountable for our actions, or not? I hope the number of atheists is still but small; and surely those professed creatures of chance can have little pretence to honour. But be that as it will, whoever unfortunately doubts of there being a Ruler of the world, or at least endeavours to flatter himself there is not, that he may follow his own inclinations, without any fear of an invisible Judge, though we cannot

Duelling should  
be shunned even  
by an atheist;

not

not expect that he will have any regard to society, or to the life or welfare of others, excepting in as far as his own interest suggests, ought nevertheless to reflect, that there can scarcely be a more serious matter for him, even according to his own principles, or rather fancies, than the putting of himself into the greatest danger of being at once plunged out of existence back into nothing, or of being thrown out of his present state of being into another, unknown to him, which may be incomparably worse than that of living here, even with less respect paid to him than perhaps he would wish to enjoy. If he thinks it below him to mind any thing else, at least let him have some concern for his own dear self, which, if he be consistent, must engage his whole attention.

and is contrary  
to the first prin-  
ciples of natural  
religion.

BUT, leaving these gloomy mortals to their own dark imaginations, let us address ourselves to the generality of mankind, who not only believe that God has made them and all other things, but has also prescribed to us a law, and will call the violators of this law to an account for their transgressions; who believe that there is a life after this present one, in which good actions will be rewarded, and bad actions punished. They, who have this belief, will readily join me in saying, that the most awful, and the most important circumstances in which we can ever possibly be, is that of our first entrance  
into

into a future state, and of our appearance before our Supreme Judge ; and that we should prepare ourselves for it with the greatest diligence of which we are capable. What then can we think—what shall we say—of the most unaccountable rashness of those thoughtless men who put themselves into such a danger, as duellists do, of rushing into a boundless eternity, and into the tremendous presence of the Great God, and of hurrying others into the same, not only without having endeavoured to have the dispositions requisite, but in the very perpetration of an act of complicated guilt—in wantonly attacking the life of a fellow-creature—in committing a most flagrant injustice against their own and their antagonists connections, and in presumptuously invading the most sacred rights of the very divine Judge, before whom they appear, who is master of their lives, and will demand a most rigorous account of them? Does not true philosophy—does not ordinary prudence, and even common sense, dictate, that we should put an infinitely greater value on the approbation of the Ruler of the universe, which is of eternal consequence to us, than on the capricious opinion of a few, and those the least to be regarded, of that small number of mortals, who can know any thing about us in the short space of this life ; and whose having esteemed us here could not afford us the least help, the least comfort, should we, by our crimes, become the miserable objects of the divine justice? Let us always



ways act so as to be able to answer for our conduct to men who are truly wise, to our own consciences, and, above all, to our Creator, remembering (and how can we forget it?) that time is short, and that our souls are immortal. This is true wisdom, and, at the same time, it is true honour. This way of thinking and of acting would soon effectually put an end to duels, and to many other strange follies that a philosophical observer sees, with regret, reign in the world.

Duels repug-  
nant to Chri-  
stian morality.

WHAT we have hitherto said scarcely rises above the reach of human reason left to itself alone; but, as we live in a country, which, for fifteen hundred years, has gloried in the name of Christian, and will, I hope, glory in it to the end of time; may we not, ought we not, to try this practice of duelling by the rules of the Christian morality contained in the sacred writings? If we do this, we shall soon see, that every attempt of this kind is most repugnant to those divine rules, most displeasing to the God of heaven and earth, and therefore exposes them, who dare to be guilty of it, to the most rigorous punishments, from that same God, who is the Lord and Judge of all mankind. The Christian religion enjoins universal, sincere benevolence to our fellow-creatures, as one of our most essential and indispensable duties, and requires of us, not only that we carefully avoid the doing of any harm to others, but also that we strive

strive to do them good, and that even to our most inveterate enemies, in obedience to our God, and for the love of him, to whom we owe all that we are, all that we can possess, and who died for us. How contrary to these noble, uniting principles, is the behaviour of a duellist, who, for some mean, selfish view, or, at best, for some cowardly fear of what may be said or thought of him by a few shallow mortals, cruelly seeks to take away the life of his neighbour, to the great hurt, perhaps, of several others; and, which renders the crime inconceivably more heinous, puts him in the most imminent danger of being for ever miserable?

THERE is another most necessary Christian disposition of mind entirely incompatible with the spirit of duelling: This is humility, a virtue commonly by far too little esteemed, because the nature of it is often not well understood. It is the *true knowledge of one's self*, which even the Grecian sage knew to be so requisite, and by which we become sensible how weak, how dependent beings we are in our present condition, and how much we stand in need of constant help and protection from above, however great things we may attain to after this state of trial is over, if, with the divine aid, we go on in the paths that the gospel points out to us. It is by this virtue that we remove the unsafe rubbish of self-conceit, and learn to build true greatness on the so-

Duels incompatible with Christian humility.

lid foundation of confidence in God alone. How opposite to these just and noble sentiments is that low, empty pride, which leads the foolishly-presuming duellist to make a sacrifice to his own supposed importance—indeed, of his own and another's life, and of the eternal welfare of them both, which are all, in a duel, most imprudently risked, and may be irrecoverably lost, if that God, who is daringly offended, do not mercifully interfere, and kindly prevent the dismal consequences that might otherwise flow from that madly rash action.

The behaviour  
of a Christian  
with regard to  
affronts.

THE true Christian gives no just cause for his being injured or affronted by any one : But if he do meet with any thing of that kind, he has recourse to a modest, firm defence of his reputation, or of his other rights,—to well-grounded remonstrances,—to the mediation and arbitration of friends,—to the decision, if necessary, of the judicature of his country : If these lawful and rational means do not produce the whole desired effect of procuring him justice ; with patient mildness he leaves the matter to time and to Providence, and to the testimony of his own antecedent and following good behaviour : But he never foolishly imagines, that the imputation of a small fault could be wiped off by the commission of a horrid crime. If any one again allege that he has received an affront from our true Christian, the Christian is ready to give a candid explanation of his conduct—



duct—acknowledges his fault, if he has really acted amiss, and cheerfully makes all just satisfaction to the party offended : but if an attempt on one another's life be still insisted on, he rejects that proposal with a determined horror ; for he neither chooses to imbrue his hands in a heedless wretch's blood, nor to have his own shed by a foolish bully. This is acting according to true honour ; for it is performing what reason dictates,—what virtue, duty, charity require,—what the Saviour of men recommends and approves.

ON the other hand, duelling must be accounted disgraceful ; for we have shown it to be irrational and absurd ; to be inhuman, barbarous, and cruel ; to be contrary to the most sacred laws of nature, of society, and of religion ; to be injurious, in a high degree, to the duellists themselves, to their neighbours, to their God. From all which it evidently follows, that such a practice is most dishonourable and disgraceful to the persons who engage in such combats ; disgraceful likewise to those who encourage them, or are in any manner accessory to them ; disgraceful to the times in which they prevail, and to the countries in which they happen ; unless they be disavowed, expiated, and repressed by severe punishments.

Duelling is disgraceful.

Duelling pretended to be useful in preventing an uncivil behaviour in young men.

It is, however, reasonable to hear and examine impartially what is wont to be brought in favour of duelling by some, who allow themselves to be carried along by the tide of custom, and to be misled by vulgar prejudices. It is therefore said, that duels are of use in preventing impoliteness, and in promoting a civil behaviour among gentlemen.

Answer.

BUT any real advantage of this kind will be found, on strict observation, to be very small, and would certainly be too dearly bought by such a violation, as we have described, of all laws human and divine. Men of good principles, and of a tolerably-good education, will avoid the insulting of others, independently of the dread of duels: so that it is only ill-principled, ill-educated youths, who can have any need of being frightened from being rude and uncivil by the fear of duels. To say, that to be terrified with being shot through the head, or pierced through the heart, is necessary for keeping our gentlemen within the bounds of civility, would give a very unfavourable idea of our manners. Are we come to such a state of barbarity, that an inoffensive behaviour, among friends and companions, must be enforced by sword and pistol? The ancient Greeks and Romans never had among them any thing like our modern duels; and yet they were remarkably polite in their intercourse; especially at some periods.

It

It may be very proper to inflict some punishment on him who has done or said any thing injurious to another; that so both he and others may be warned to behave more properly afterwards, and that justice may be done to the person wronged: but all this should be managed by some court of judicature, or by a jury, or by arbitrators chosen for the purpose; and the punishment should be proportioned to the fault; and might very often be, the being expelled from society for some limited time, or the like, with the necessary satisfaction to be made to him who had been injured. This would be rational, and might be useful. But for the injurer and the injured, the affronted and the affronting, the guilty and the innocent, to go out, and, with equal danger to both, to shoot at one another with pistols, or thrust at one another with deadly weapons, instead of preventing rudeness, is, in itself, the greatest degree of brutality. Indeed, the spirit of duelling necessarily tends to destroy true, cordial politeness, because it tends to destroy mutual confidence, and throws companions into a kind of state of war. The duellist virtually says to all around him, even to those whom he calls his friends, "Beware what you say, what you do; for if I happen to fancy that any of you offends me, I am very capable of blowing out his brains." Is this, then, politeness, or the means of preserving it?

The proper method for preventing and punishing affronts.



Duelling alleged to be useful for making men more brave.

LET us see what else is to be said against us. Duelling is thought by some to be serviceable in rendering men more bold, and especially more fit for military exploits. The like pretext was used, with more reason, by the Romans, for their shows of gladiators; and is brought by the Spaniards for their manly, though to us shocking, combats with wild bulls,

Answer.

BUT even were it granted that duels could answer that purpose; it is evident, after what we have said, that this would not render them lawful or excusable.

WE have already seen, that the fighting of a duel is no proof of a man's being previously endued with true, estimable courage: But can it then inspire one with more courage than he had before? At least this does not appear from the first step the duellist takes, after having obtained what he seemed to have in view: He makes off like a coward, flying from the too just resentment of his fallen antagonist's friends, and from the laws of his country; but carrying along with him, in his breast, remorse, guilt, and the haunting remembrance of, perhaps, a murdered friend; which cannot be very conducive to make him have a well-grounded firmness of mind, but may well have the contrary effect, and strike him with terror in the hour of danger.

THE

THE great Frederic of Prussia, who must be allowed to have been a competent judge of such matters, never sought to raise the courage of his officers by duels. When, in his armies, a challenge was given, and accepted, the parties were obliged, by his express command, to fight until one of them fell, and then he made the other be hanged. This effectually put a stop to duels, in a short time. He had probably learned this way of acting from the example of his predecessor in the career of glory, Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, who had forbidden duels among his troops, under the pain of death. Nevertheless, two general officers, who had quarrelled some time after, begged of the King permission to settle their difference by the sword. Gustavus, justly irritated at this proposal, at first demurred; yet he afterwards gave his consent, fixed the time and place, and said he would be witness. Accordingly he came with a body of foot, surrounded the champions, and gave orders to the executioner, whom he had brought with him, to wait until one of the two should fall down dead, and then instantly before him to strike off the head of the other. The two generals, hearing these orders, looked for a little at one another, in silence—threw themselves at their Sovereign's feet—asked pardon—obtained it—were reconciled: nor were duels heard of any more in the Swedish armies. I believe it will be likewise allowed, that the troops, who, some years ago, made the

ever-

The greatest commander thought not duels expedient for exciting true courage.

ever-memorable defence of Gibraltar, were distinguished for bravery ; yet it seems their great, experienced commander did not look upon duels as necessary, but rather as most pernicious ; and consequently took care to hinder their appearance within his walls.

**What courage  
can be acquired  
by duelling.**

I MAY grant, that the escaping repeatedly out of duels, with life, may, in some thoughtless beings, help to increase ferocity, and a certain mechanical fearlessness, such as is frequently observed in robbers, who have been long on the highway : But genuine courage must be grounded on a sense of duty, and of honour, which is the constant performance of duty ; and, in a military man, it must be perfected by his seeing real war. All this is either repugnant to duelling, or has nothing to do with it.

**The spirit of  
duelling is not  
compatible with  
true courage.**

INDEED, if we reflect seriously on our nature, and on our present situation in this world, we shall find, that no man here can be rationally and steadily courageous in the midst of so many dangers to which he is daily exposed, without his having a lively confidence in the protection of Providence ; and this confidence the duellist cannot, with reason, have, as he acts in diametrical opposition to the divine law. Hence, so far is duelling from being useful for the acquisition or increase of true courage, that, on the contrary,



contrary, it tends to destroy it, or is even incompatible with it.

THAT we may be able to form the more just judgment of duels, it may be proper to take a cursory view of their origin, and of the causes which continue to produce them.

Of the origin  
and causes of  
duels.

NATIONS, at war with one another, have sometimes agreed to devolve the determination of the contest between them, on one; or at least a few champions chosen on each side: But, such combats were very different from modern duels, because they were undertaken by public authority, against a foreign enemy, and that with the express design of preventing the effusion of much more blood, which appeared to be otherwise inevitable.

Single combats  
fought to pre-  
vent battles.

IN the next place, we may take notice, that the Lombards, an ignorant, warlike people, observing that disputes between independent States were commonly decided by an appeal to the sword; very unreasonably applied the same violent method to the decision of doubtful cases between individuals; and the parties concerned fought themselves, or got champions to enter the lists for them; and justice, truth, or innocence were adjudged to be on the side of the victor. This practice involved in it a superstitious belief, as *our* duels seem to do, that God is

Duels fought to  
discover some  
hidden truth.

D

obliged

obliged to interpose miraculously in favour of those who are in the right, whenever we please, and in the manner we please, which He has nowhere promised to do : whereas, in truth, such combats can only show the valour and dexterity of the combatants. However, these trials by the sword, among the Lombards, though very absurd, had this great advantage over the duels of our days, that they were undertaken and carried on under the eye of a judge, who was not only to give his consent, and see that the established rules were observed, but had also power to make the combatants desist when he thought it proper, by which means the loss of lives was commonly prevented.

Single combats  
between knight-  
errants.

THE expeditions from Europe to the Holy Land, in the twelfth century, and the wars between the Christians and the Infidels in the southern parts of Europe itself, with the fabulous compositions of the writers of romances, gave rise to, and propagated the spirit of chivalry. Whilst it lasted, the knight-errants occasionally fought single combats, by which they endeavoured to show their own valour, or whimsically pretended to assert the superior worth and beauty of a favourite lady. These combats were, indeed, much less blameable, and more excuseable, than our duels ; yet we now clearly see, that they were extremely foolish ; and we justly applaud Cervantes for his having discredited them entirely, by ridicule in Spain, and, indeed, every where else.

BEFORE

BEFORE the end of the fifteenth century, partly from the prejudices of the times, partly by reason of the unsettled government of Scotland, during the several minorities of our kings, and on account of the perpetual feuds among our leading men, duels of a very fatal nature had become pretty frequent in this country, as we learn from John Mair, our learned countryman, an eminent divine, who taught at Paris and St Andrews soon after the year fifteen hundred of the Christian æra. In his work on the fourth Book of the Sentences, published in the year 1516, after defining a duel, according to the most ordinary acceptation of the word at that time, to be "a combat between two, for the proof of the truth of something hidden, which cannot be determined by any human means, but by the victory of either of them," he proves very well, that such combats were entirely inadequate to the end proposed, and wholly repugnant to all laws human and divine; and concludes, that it was the duty of divines, and of other pious men, when they knew that such combats were intended, to exhort the king, in the name of God, not to permit them; and then to represent to the persons themselves resolved to fight, the dismal consequences to be feared from their design, the sinfulness of such an action, and the danger of their dying miserably. And he adds, that should any one, to whom it belongs, by the nature of his office, to give these admonitions, neglect to do it, he would be

D 2

guilty

Duels in Scotland in the middle ages.

Dist. 15. q. 236  
fol. 123.



guilty of a most culpable omission. In treating this subject, he informs us, that though the duels described by him had been pretty common in Spain before, yet they had been strictly prohibited by Ferdinand the Catholic, then reigning; that they were by no means allowed in France, nor in any other kingdom that he could recollect, excepting in Scotland, where they were not unusual, and where, very lately before, seven pairs of Olivers and Turnbells had fought successively, to no purpose, but to their mutual ruin.

Modern duels proceed from ancient single combats, but are more unreasonable.

It is very probable, that these more ancient single combats paved the way to those that are now practised; and that the memory of the first helps to preserve in the minds of the vulgar a prejudice in favour of the last. But, if a comparison be made between them, the duels of these our times will appear to be much more unbecoming a reasonable creature than those of former ages: For, however absurd in their principle the ancient single combats generally were; yet, as we have hinted already, they were entered upon with a good deal of deliberation; they were carried on with great formality, under the controul of a judge, and very often in presence of the sovereign himself, who had granted his permission, with a concurrence of the first persons of the land, all which tended to excuse the combatants; whereas our modern duellists commonly meet to discharge pistols at one another, in consequence of some gust of passion,

or from the effects of intoxication, and by stealth, like thieves or robbers; being very conscious that the horrid business they are about must be condemned by their best, dearest, and wisest friends.

THE very difference of the weapons must also strike a person of any reflection: for the ancients, in their conflicts of this nature, though they were certainly much mistaken; yet, it must be owned that they encountered one another in a manly manner, with sword and spear, and frequently on lightly steeds; and thus they had an opportunity of showing strength and agility of body, with address in the use of their arms and in the management of their horses: But in these latter times, especially in the British Isles, duelling is mostly reduced to the discharging of trifling pistols at one another, in which the principal bodily advantage is that of a diminutive size; so that here a dwarf is far superior to a giant: the only defence that can be made, is, the presenting of one's side to the adversary, instead of one's breast and belly, which affords very little room for dexterity; and the only action is, the holding out of a pistol in one's hand, and the drawing of the trigger, of which a woman or a boy is as capable as any man. The appearance of the danger is likewise so much hidden, that no great firmness of mind is requisite to face it. A good deal of thoughtlessness, some degree of passion, and a

Other differences between ancient and modern duels.

few

few glasses of some strong liquor, is fully enough to form a hero of this kind,

Duels often depend on mere chance.

THE event of these pistol duels appears to be often left almost entirely to chance; and, as that is the case, it would surely be much more proper to decide the quarrel by a throw of harmless dice, than by a discharge of dangerous bullets. The first method would be contrary to no law, but that of good sense, which they both are, and it would be just as much to the purpose as the other.

But some duellists render the event more certain by exercise in shooting.

IT is true, the person, who is of a duelling disposition, may so exercise himself in the shooting of a pistol, as to be able to take his aim with great exactness, even without putting his eye to the pistol; and then chance would have little place, on his part, as a shooter; but, in this accomplishment, a worthless person may equal, or excel, the most valuable man on earth. And if both parties be trained well in this exercise, and be in earnest, it would seem that they could scarcely fail, firing at the distance of ten or twelve paces, to wound one another mortally, unless agitation and fear, and the consequent shaking of the hand, should prevent it. The meeting, in a duel, of two such persons, expert in taking their aim with pistols, would resemble the mad action of two Polish gentlemen, of the highest honour, to be sure, who agreed to seat themselves together on a barrel of gunpowder,



der, and each of them to apply a match to it in such a manner, that each might have the diabolical satisfaction to think that he was blowing the other up into the air.

WE may perceive another notable difference between the more ancient and the modern single combats, in their alleged causes, or in the ends proposed to be obtained by them: The discovery of some truth was what they said they aimed at in duels of old: Which one of two contending parties had justice, innocence, truth, or the greatest worth and valour, on his side, was to be determined by the issue of the ancient combats: But, in our times, duels are generally pretended to be fought in order to obtain reparation of honour, on the one side, and in order not to lose it, on the other. From what we have already said, it appears to be sufficiently clear, that the ancient duellists were, and that modern duellists are, egregiously mistaken, and shamefully misled by groundless prejudices, in their most improper choice of duels as the means for attaining their different ends. But, besides this, if we study the heart of man; if we consider all the circumstances, and a deceit. that commonly precede, and accompany a duel; and if we attend to what has been often candidly owned by duellists themselves—we will be convinced, that, for the most part, the discovery of truth, and the reparation of honour, have been little more than

The ends proposed in ancient duels different from those that are held forth in modern ones.

A mistake in both,

than fair; outward pretences for duels; and that the real causes of them, very thinly covered over by those false pretexts, were no better than a foolish pride and vain-glory, hatred and revenge; and the like irregular and criminal passions.

Duels sometimes proceed from the dread of dishonour.

SOMETIMES, indeed; duels do, in a great measure, proceed from the fear of being despised by those of one's acquaintance, and of being consequently rendered less capable of acting one's part in life, according to his station. We have already observed, that some persons happen to receive an affront; which cannot be wiped off but by their giving a challenge to the affronter, if, indeed, the barbarous prejudices, too generally established, are attended to. A challenge may also be sent to one in such circumstances, that, according to the same prejudices, it cannot be, without apparent dishonour, refused. Nay, should a duel, in many such cases, be declined; the parties declining it would, by many of their fellows, be treated as cowards, as men of no spirit, and as unfit companions for a gentleman. What must one do, when he is unfortunately placed in such a situation as this? It is very easy for us to see what he certainly *ought* to do: but, it must be owned, that it is not at all easy for human nature to acquiesce to what duty plainly dictates on such occasions. He must avoid a horrid crime, whatever the consequences be. He must not be frightened into a shocking transgression of the laws

laws of God, of nature, and of society, by the dread of losing the regard of a few mistaken mortals; and he must comfort himself with the approbation of the wise and good, of whom there is still a remnant on the earth; with that of his own conscience, and, particularly, with that of Him who is soon to be the supreme Judge of all. His acting thus will be a noble imitation of the behaviour of those generous souls, who, in former times, could not be terrified to do any thing repugnant to the faith of Christ, by the greatest temporal losses, the sharpest torments, by the most insulting contempt from those around them. Perhaps the day may soon come, when the magnanimity of those, who will have bravely despised the opinion in favour of duels, will be highly applauded by the world itself, convinced at last of the unreasonableness of these combats, and surprised at its preceding pernicious error. The more one loses or suffers in acting a just and virtuous part, the greater is his worth, the more pure his virtue, and the brighter, in the end, will be his glory, as Plato has, like a true philosopher, well observed. To be among the first to resist a barbarous, inveterate custom, is worthy of a man endowed with a great mind.

BUT be all that as it will, evident it is, from the reflections we have made, that scarcely can a case be supposed or imagined, in which a challenge to

Duels almost  
always criminal.

E fight



fight a duel can be either given or accepted, without committing a grievous crime ; notwithstanding the great temptations that sometimes may, nay, actually do occur, to give or to accept such a challenge. True it is, however, that, at the same time, they are much, very much, to blame, whoever they are, who contribute to create these temptations, or who do not effectually remove them, when they have it in their power, and still more when it is their duty, by their office, to do so : And this naturally leads me to treat of the most effectual means for preventing this practice of duelling.

The means for  
preventing  
duels.

INDEED, all that we have hitherto said on this subject tends directly to prevent duels ; because it tends to bring them into just disrepute with all who will take the trouble to think a little on the matter. But perhaps some persons, who are fully convinced of their criminality, may still wish to have some more particular means proposed for getting such a nuisance banished soon out of all civilized nations. To satisfy such persons shall now be our endeavour.

First means,  
the laws of  
every country.

THE first remedy to this evil, of which we have been hitherto so justly complaining, should most certainly be afforded by the laws of every country that has the least pretence to civilization. We have already seen, that duelling is a most audacious usurpation of the power of judging of life and death,  
which

which all States necessarily take from the individuals concerned, and reserve to those persons and courts, to whom that most sacred and important trust is, by public authority, committed. It must, therefore, be nothing less than *criminal* in the rulers of any State to connive at such a practice. We may, with all respect, justly say to the governors of any kingdom or commonwealth whatever, " Either you allow your subjects to decide their quarrels, where honour is thought to be concerned, by a combat between themselves, without any interference of public authority, or you do not allow it: if you allow it, you evidently permit what is most hurtful to society, when you could prevent it, as experience has shown; and you open the door to frequent murders, and, indeed, to a constant intestine war; because it is easy to make pretended honour enter into almost every dispute; and thus, we must with all deference remonstrate, you are wanting very essentially to your duty; and all those murders that happen in consequence of your cruel permission, may be justly imputed to you. But if you do not allow those combats, as you certainly will not avow that you do, is it not incumbent on you to take effectual measures to put a stop to them, by laws adequate to the end in view, and these laws put strictly in execution? If this is neglected to be done by you, can you flatter yourselves that you

"are free from a very blameable omission of your  
"duty?"

All duels are u-  
surpations of the  
public authori-  
ty.

WE may likewise observe, that either the affront or injury, that the challenger has received, supposes, on the part of the person challenged, a crime deserving death, or not. If it does, then the judgment of this capital crime must belong to the criminal judge, and to the jury appointed by the State, and the Government must forbid and punish the rash and most dangerous interference of the private party, who presumes to make himself judge and executioner, without any authority. But if no such crime is supposed to be involved in the affront or injury that occasions the duel, then the challenger is doubly guilty, and puts his antagonist to death, or at least attempts to do so, and endangers his own life, contrary to the laws both of eternal justice and of society, which attempt, without all doubt, should be forbidden, and severely punished, by every well-regulated Government.

Of the laws a-  
gainst duels,

OF this, indeed, all the different States of Europe have been long aware, in so far as to see the necessity of enacting laws against duelling, and have actually decreed heavy punishments to be inflicted on the duellists, and on those also whom they call their seconds. But either these laws, in many countries, must not be sufficient for the purpose, or else there  
must



must be some fatal neglect in the putting of them in execution ; for almost every newspaper shocks us with an account of some one or more of these duels, of which the consequences are often dismal.

HERE, in Scotland, we have laws which make in Scotland, duelling punishable by death ; and even though no death, nor even fighting, ensue, the giving or accepting of a challenge renders both principals and seconds, according to our laws, liable to be banished, and to have their moveable goods confiscated. But, in the very cases where blood has been spilt and lives lost, when were these laws called forth to produce their intended effect ? No prosecution follows, by the neglect or connivance of the public prosecutor.

IN England, they have sometimes instituted trials in England, of duellists : But what has been the event ? It would appear, that either the jury was packt, or the jurors were misled, rather, we shall suppose, by prejudice, and mistaken, but cruel mercy, than by criminal prevarication, so as to bring in the person accused *not guilty* ; and these verdicts tended directly to encourage duelling, by offering to it impunity.

IN France, severe laws against duels have been in France, promulgated ; and their kings, for more than a century, have sworn at their coronation, that they will never pardon this crime. But what does all this signify ?

nify? Duels there are but too common; yet, by there being no prosecution thought of, or through the want of witnesses, or by the means of the pretext of their *rencontres*, the criminal always gets off, and that, perhaps, with applause and advantages. Nay, in open defiance of all law, and of humanity itself, in some instances, men who, no doubt, wished to be looked upon as gentlemen, but evidently were no better, in this at least, than sanguinary barbarians, have taken upon them to decree, that it was necessary for two persons to repeat their attacks on one another, until one of them should be mortally wounded: And yet, to the astonishment of those who think justly, the Government took no notice of these enormities.

A revival of the laws against duels necessary.

It is not, I think, much to the honour of the Assembly of this last-mentioned nation, which is just now pretending to reform *all* abuses, that some of its members rush out, from time to time, to murder one another, without meeting with any reprehension, that we hear of, from the great legislative body. But, before they shall have completed their task, they will, it is to be hoped, take this matter into their serious consideration.

THEY, and perhaps every other nation in Europe, would, I shall venture to say, do well to revise their laws against duelling; and, in doing so, they would probably find, that some new ones to that purpose should

should be enacted ; especially such as might make the practice be thought ignominious, which it well deserves.

WHEN it does not appear necessary to punish the duellist with death, (and, I think, blood should never be shed but to prevent the effusion of more blood) then he might, according to the suggestion of an ingenious gentleman, be confined to a mad-house for some years, and made there, in some way or other, labour for his bread.

Proper punishments of duellists.

Dr Iberti.

IT might also be considered, whether, as those gentlemen have thought fit to execute their own rash sentences against those who have offended them, it might not be proper to associate them for a time with their fellow-officer the hangman, and thus oblige them to be assistant in the execution of more deliberate and just sentences, than their own can have been.

IF it should be thought too severe to confiscate the moveable goods of those who, as seconds, are accessory to duels ; they should, at least, be deprived of whatever office, civil or military, they possessed before ; and they should, at the same time, be declared absolutely incapable of ever holding any such office for the future.

IT



New laws to prevent evasions necessary.

It is particularly to be observed, that some new laws should be formed to prevent the evasions that have rendered the former laws ineffectual, and which, without this precaution, would have the like effect on any new laws that might be made.

A tribunal and new laws, for preventing and punishing affronts, requisite.

It is also necessary, that the legislature make some new regulations for preventing, in as far as possible, what we call *affronts*; for punishing those who are injurious to others in that way; and for getting reasonable redress made to such persons as shall have been wronged in their reputation, or otherwise deprived of the respect due to them among those of their acquaintance. It is, indeed, true, that we should not be apt to think ourselves affronted. It is most prudent to neglect many things of that nature; for to be easily hurt is a sign, or rather a proof, of one's being weak. But when one does receive an affront that cannot well be overlooked, without considerable prejudice to one's self, and concern to his friends; he should then, in the first place, strive to obtain justice by a fair appeal to arbiters, and especially to those, who may have happened to see and hear the cause of offence, if they are thought proper persons. Yet, as sometimes this peaceable method will not have the desired effect; there should certainly be, in every State, a tribunal established to judge of such differences; to inflict condign punishment on the guilty; and to procure due reparation to the injured.

Injured. As, from the very nature of society, Government is obliged to give us protection in the enjoyment of personal safety, and in the just possession of our goods; so it is likewise incumbent on it to take the most effectual means to guard our honour and reputation from insult and injury.

BUT, I hope, some of these gentlemen, to whom it properly belongs to prepare and propose proper laws for the public welfare of these nations, will immediately turn their attention to this subject, and, with the joint wisdom of the British Senate, concert such measures as may not only put an end to duelling within the limits of their own jurisdiction, but also bring it into just discredit all over the globe. If they have so much compassion for the African slaves, and show themselves so desirous of restoring them to liberty, and of preserving others, at such a distance, from falling into the same condition; may we not expect, and, with all due submission, even *require*, of them, that they will have some concern for their gallant countrymen, for their friends and relations, who are in danger every day, by *their* too long neglect, of losing their lives in a most wretched, unavailing manner, to the unspeakable grief and loss of those connected with them, whom they leave behind them.

The members of Parliament ought to attend to this subject.

F

HOWEVER,

Laws against  
duelling should  
be put in execu-  
tion.

HOWEVER, it is not enough to have laws in themselves sufficiently severe against duelling, unless they are put exactly in execution. We must, therefore, in the *second* place, use the freedom to beg earnestly of the public prosecutor, of the judges, and of the juries of our country, to do their duty, which certainly is to punish and discourage duels, in as far as the laws of the land direct. The public prosecutor ought to reflect what he owes, from his office, to the safety of his fellow-subjects, and how answerable he is to God and to man for the consequences, should his indolence, or mistaken favour, be the cause of the continuation of this practice so hurtful to society. The judges should, with the candour and impartiality that become their station, make known to the jury the law, in this particular, and the necessity and intention of it. The juries should be persuaded, that they are bound, not only by their oath, but by the common ties of humanity also, to stand rigidly to the truth in the verdict they bring in. We should always show mercy, when it is really mercy: But, to spare a guilty individual, when this does harm, by its consequences, to many innocent persons, is, in fact, most blameable cruelty. The very criminal himself, were he truly equitable, and possessed of true honour in a high degree, would be inclined to petition for the rigour of the law against himself. This would, indeed, have something heroical in it; but it is little more than what  
he



he owes to his country, and to society in general, the laws of which he has transgressed, and which justly requires this atonement from him.

It is true, some lenity may, and should be used, with regard to past crimes of this nature, because the prejudices of the times, and other circumstances, may have been some excuse, and some alleviation of the guilt : But, if the old laws against duelling were expressly renewed, and new ones promulgated, then the rigorous execution of them will be very necessary. This exactness, however, will be requisite only for a short time ; because when it comes once to be generally understood through the kingdom, that duels are to be punished severely and constantly, without favour, they will soon be left off, and universally detested, as they deserve ; especially if the other means, that we are to propose, shall be adopted.

Lenity may be allowed for what is past only.

In the *third* place, therefore, I should wish, that some of the best writers of these times would think this subject worthy of their attention, and, supplying the deficiencies of this rude essay, would argue and shame mankind into reason, on a matter of so great moment. Besides treatises, essays, and letters, that might be published against duelling, separately by themselves, or in periodical works ; it affords abundant matter for tragedies, which might help greatly to excite, in the minds of men, horror at the

Books against duels might be useful.

shocking circumstances and melancholy consequences of this *more than civil war*, if I may be allowed to use the expression of an ancient poet. And although, for the most part, duels are of a mournful nature, yet the duellist might well be exposed to ridicule, either in comedy, or in a mock-heroic composition in verse or in prose. His false notions of honour, and his affected courage covering his cowardice but very thinly, like that of the bragging soldier in Plautus, are sometimes extremely ridiculous. The Norwich society, mentioned in the beginning, and other such societies that may espouse the cause of humanity in this particular, might propose a prize for the best piece against duelling, either specifying the kind of the composition they require, or leaving the choice of this to the writer himself.

Resolutions  
should be entered  
into against  
duels.

SUCH publications might be of considerable use in destroying the false opinion in favour of duels; for which purpose we may, in the *fourth* place, propose our earnest wish, that the most esteemed bodies of men, convinced of the truth of what we have been representing, would enter into resolutions to discourage duels, and particularly to speak against them on all convenient occasions. The bravest regiments in the British service, who have shown their valour in the defence of their country—who have often made our enemies tremble, and have consequently no need of the paltry, shameful practice of duelling to convince

vince the world of their honour, should take the lead in nobly overcoming this disgraceful prejudice, and resolve to avoid and despise such a mean and improper ostentation of courage. All differences that may happen to arise among themselves, might be easily settled in a manner becoming men, by a court formed of the officers of the corps, which should decide which of the two who had quarrelled was most to be blamed, and what satisfaction ought to be made by that person; enforcing their sentence by refusing their company and conversation to the refractory; but never, on any account, giving their approbation to any kind of violence.

THOSE persons, whom Providence has placed in a more eminent station among their fellow-creatures, and whose words are much attended to, and make a deep impression on the minds of those around them, should humanely strive to rectify the opinions of others on this head, which they have so much in their power to do, even in their ordinary conversations; and to this, formal declarations of their sentiments may be profitably added.

Persons in high rank should declare against duels.

MAY we not flatter ourselves, that some new associations may be formed for the sole and avowed purpose of extirpating duelling, by all lawful and prudent means, as has been done for the obtaining of other less important ends?

Associations might be formed for the express purpose of exterminating duels.

IN



The fair sex  
should discour-  
age duels.

IN this the ladies could certainly have a considerable weight, if they would be pleased to treat duellists with the marked contempt that we have demonstrated the behaviour of such men should draw upon them, from every person who considers it with attention. But however strange it may appear to us at first, yet we must, with concern, observe, that the most amiable and tender-hearted part of the human race have not always that horror that we might expect at those cruel men, who deprive the wife of her dear husband, the mother of her darling son, the virgin of her beloved brother, or of a betrothed lover. The reason of this probably is, women are sensible of the weakness and delicacy of their frame, and of the need they may have of protection and assistance. Hence they esteem and favour those who, they imagine, are endowed with valour, in which the duellists would make us believe that they excel. But still, the female sex is very capable of perceiving truth, when it is properly represented to them: and they may, without great difficulty, distinguish true courage, which is regulated by reason, and is exerted, on proper occasions, from the deceitful appearance of it, by which heedless mortals rush on to ruin, and bring guilt on themselves, and misery very often, and, almost always, sorrow and affliction, on those who have the misfortune to be their friends and relations. My fair readers may reflect, that duels are seldom fought on account of women possessed

ness of virtuous characters, who have little need of such a barbarous defence. It is from quarrels, occasioned by those who are the disgrace of their sex, that these bloody conflicts commonly take their rise; which circumstance should make ladies of virtue and honour declare the more warmly against them, and lend their friendly aid to make them be detested, which would well become the superior tenderness of their hearts, and their inclination to humanity, and to that peace and concord, which, they will own, is most desirable. We think they are obliged, in a particular manner, to exert themselves in this, which we shall now endeavour to demonstrate to be a common duty of all mankind without exception.

WE have more than once had occasion to take notice, that the principal cause of duels, or, at least, the most ordinary pretext and excuse for them, is the opinion that many have, that they are sometimes necessary for the vindication of one's honour. Take away this opinion, which we have shown, we hope to satisfaction, to be groundless, and then what is properly a duel would never happen. If all should join in condemning duels, there would remain no temptation to fight them, but merely what would proceed from the passions of anger and revenge. Hence it appears to follow evidently, that whoever speaks in favour of duels, is actually contributing to the continuation of them; and whoever speaks, in a

Every body is obliged to speak against duels, in order to destroy the false opinion in favour of them.

rational,

rational, proper way, against them, is doing something more or less, according to his influence and authority, to get them left off. Now as, we flatter ourselves, we have proved, clearly enough, that duelling is an absurd, barbarous, criminal practice ; we must infer, that whoever speaks for it, is doing hurt to mankind ; and whoever neglects to blame it, on suitable occasions, neglects to lend his helping hand to his neighbour in great danger. When you defend or excuse duellists, you may easily see that you are, in some degree, at a distance, exciting one fellow-creature to murder another : you may see, that that very conversation of your's may be partly the cause of many murders, and of many other calamities, before the end of time, if the custom of duelling should unhappily be continued. But it is far from being enough to leave off putting the pistol into the hand of our fellow-creature, that he may kill his neighbour, which is what the defenders of duelling are, in some measure, guilty of doing: We must, further, snatch the mortal weapon from him, and do what depends on us to prevent the harm. In this we can all very easily and very effectually give assistance, by barely showing our disapprobation of the practice ; for this tends to lessen the opinion in favour of it, from which it proceeds. To this we think all are strictly obliged : It is what humanity evidently requires of every one who understands the subject ; which, indeed, is not above the reach of the meanest



meanest capacity. But particularly those persons, who have ever fallen into the mistake of either speaking or writing in favour of duels, are obliged to retract, in the most effectual way they can, whatever they have said or written of that dangerous tendency, as they themselves will easily conclude, from what we have here, with the best intention imaginable, laid before them. This is what they owe to themselves, to their fellow-creatures, to their Maker.

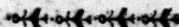
SHOULD this last reasoning, which, we think, will Conclusion. stand the severest trial, be generally known, sufficiently understood, and assented to, no more will be necessary for the preventing of duels.—Whatever the event may be, the writer of these Reflections is conscious to himself of meaning well, of having in view to put all the stop he can to what he must always consider as a most pernicious mistake, as a very great evil; and he flatters himself, that his well-intended endeavours cannot be entirely without effect. He even entertains some hopes, that many brave men, who before, through prejudice, thought themselves to be under a necessity of being always ready to give or accept a challenge, will soon come to be glad at being freed from the tyranny of that barbarous custom; and will rejoice at their being at liberty to employ their courage according to the dictates of reason and religion, law and conscience; and will

G

think

think themselves obliged to those who have been active in bringing about this *revolution*.

THAT our readers may have the more just idea of what a duel is, we have thought proper to reprint here the account given by Sir Edward Sackville, of the fatal one fought between him and Lord Bruce, which was published long since in the *Guardian*, No. 133.



.....—WE met at Tergofa in Zealand, it being the place allotted for rendezvous, where he, accompanied with one Mr Crawford, an English gentleman, for his second, a surgeon, and a man, arrived with all the speed he could. And there having rendered himself, I addressed my second, Sir John Heidon, to let him understand, that now all following should be done by consent, as concerning the terms whereon we should fight, as also the place. To our seconds we gave power for their appointments, who agreed we should go to Antwerp, from thence to Bergen-op-Zoom, where in the midway, but a village divides the States territories from  
the

the Archduke's. And there was the destined stage, to the end, that, having ended, he that could, might presently exempt himself from the justice of the country, by retiring into the dominion not offended. It was farther concluded, that in case any should fall or slip, that then the combat should cease, and he whose ill-fortune had so subjected him, was to acknowledge his life to have been in the other's hands. But in case one party's sword should break, because that could only chance by hazard, it was agreed that the other should take no advantage, but either then be made friends, or else upon even terms go to it again. Thus these conclusions being each of them related to his party, was by us both approved, and assented to. Accordingly we embarked for Antwerp. And by reason my Lord, as I conceive, because he could not handsomely, without danger of discovery, had not paired the sword I sent him to Paris, bringing one of the same length, but twice as broad, my second excepted against it, and advised me to match my own, and send him the choice, which I obeyed, it being, you know, the challenger's privilege to elect his weapon. At the delivery of the sword, which was performed by Sir John Heidon, it pleased the Lord Bruce to choose my own, and then, past expectation, he told him, that he found himself so far behind-hand, as a little of my blood would not serve his turn; and therefore he was now resolved to have me alone, because he knew



(for I will use his own words) "that so worthy a gentleman, and my friend, could not endure to stand by and see him do that which he must, to satisfy himself and his honour." Hereunto Sir John Heidon replied, that such intentions were bloody and butcherly, far unfitting so noble a personage, who should desire to bleed for reputation, not for life; withal adding, he thought himself injured, being come thus far, now to be prohibited from executing those honourable offices he came for. The Lord, for answer, only reiterated his former resolutions; whereupon Sir John, leaving him the sword he had elected, delivered me the other, with his determinations. The which, not for matter, but manner, so moved me, as though, to my remembrance, I had not of a long while eaten more liberally than at dinner, and therefore unfit for such an action, (seeing the surgeons hold a wound upon a full stomach much more dangerous than otherwise), I requested my second to certify him, I would presently decide the difference, and therefore he should presently meet me on horseback, only waited on by our surgeons, they being unarmed. Together we rode, but one before the other some twelve score, about two English miles; and then passion, having so weak an enemy to assail as my direction, easily became victor, and, using his power, made me obedient to his commands. I being verily mad with anger the Lord Bruce should thirst after my life with  
a kind

a kind of assuredness, seeing I had come so far, and needlessly, to give him leave to regain his lost reputation, I bade him alight, which, with all willingness, he quickly granted, and there in a meadow, ankle-deep in water at the least, bidding farewell to our doublets, in our shirts began to charge each other, having afore commanded our surgeons to withdraw themselves a pretty distance from us, conjuring them besides, as they respected our favours, or their own safeties, not to stir, but suffer us to execute our pleasures: we being fully resolved (God forgive us!) to dispatch each other by what means we could, I made a thrust at my enemy, but was short, and in drawing back my arm I received a great wound thereon, which I interpreted as a reward for my short shooting; but in revenge I prest in to him, though I then missed him also, and then receiving a wound in my right pap, which past level through my body, and almost to my back. And there we wrestled for the two greatest and dearest prizes we could ever expect trial for, honour and life; in which struggling my hand, having but an ordinary glove on it, lost one of her servants, though the meanest; which hung by a skin, and to fight yet remaineth as before, and I am put in hope one day to recover the use of it again. But at last, breathless, yet keeping our holds, there past on both sides propositions of quitting each other's sword. But when amity was dead, confidence could

not

not live; and who should quit first was the question; which, on neither part, either would perform; and, restraining again afresh, with a kick and a wrench together, I freed my long captived weapon: which incontinently levelling at his throat, being master still of his, I demanded if he would ask his life, or yield his sword; both which, though in that imminent danger, he bravely denied to do. Myself being wounded, and feeling loss of blood, having three conduits running on me, began to make me faint, and he courageously persisting not to accord to either of my propositions, remembrance of his former bloody desire, and feeling of my present estate, I struck at his heart, but with his avoiding mist my aim, yet past through the body, and drawing out my sword repast it through again, through another place; when he cried, "Oh! I am slain!" seconding his speech with all the force he had, to cast me. But being too weak, after I had defended his assault, I easily became master of him, laying him on his back; when being upon him, I redemanded if he would request his life, but it seemed he prized it not at so dear a rate to be beholden for it; bravely replying, "He scorned it." Which answer of his was so noble and worthy, as I protest I could not find in my heart to offer him any more violence, only keeping him down, till at length his surgeon, afar off, cried out, "He would immediately die if his wounds were not stopped." Whereupon I asked if he desired



desired his surgeon should come, which he accepted of; and so being drawn away, I never offered to take his sword, accounting it inhuman to rob a dead man, for so I held him to be. This thus ended, I retired to my surgeon, in whose arms after I had remained a while for want of blood, I lost my sight, and withal, as I then thought, my life also. But strong water and his diligence quickly recovered me, when I escaped a great danger. For my Lord's surgeon, when nobody dreamt of it, came full at me with his Lord's sword; and had not mine, with my sword, interposed himself, I had been slain by those base hands: although my Lord Bruce, weltering in his blood, and past all expectation of life, conformable to all his former carriage, which was undoubtedly noble, cry'd out, "Rascal! hold thy hand." So may I prosper as I have dealt sincerely with you in this relation; which I pray you, with the inclosed letter, deliver to my Lord Chamberlain. And so, &c.

Yours,

*Louvain, the 8th of Sept. 7*  
1613. }

EDWARD SACKVILLE.

F I N I S.

A circular library stamp from the British Museum. The text "BRITISH" is curved along the top inner edge, and "MUSEUM" is curved along the bottom inner edge. In the center, the date "10 AU 92" is stamped. There are small dots separating the top and bottom text from the central date.

1950

EDWARD BACELLIN

214-120

